

Brussels, 6 October 2009

Commission clears the way for a single European Road Toll Service

The European Commission today adopted a decision setting out the essential technical specifications and requirements needed to launch a European Electronic Toll Service (EETS) which will enable road users to easily pay tolls throughout the whole European Union (EU) thanks to one subscription contract with one service provider and one single on-board unit. EETS will be available on all infrastructures in the entire Community such as motorways, tunnels and bridges where toll can be paid using on-board equipment. EETS will eventually limit cash transactions at toll stations, thereby improving traffic flow and reducing congestion.

European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, in charge of Transport, considers this decision to be the most important improvement for drivers since the abolition of border controls, stating that "the European Electronic Toll Service will enable road users to easily pay tolls throughout the whole European Union thanks to one subscription contract with one service provider and one single on-board unit".

Electronic toll systems were introduced in several European countries in the early 1990s. Most systems operate with an on-board unit communicating the vehicle's characteristics to the road operators in view to determining the toll, for instance based on the vehicle's weight and size.

However, the various national and local electronic road toll systems are generally incompatible and can only communicate with their respective on-board units. These non-interoperable road toll systems especially hinder international road transport. For example, to travel from Portugal to Denmark five or more on-board units might be needed on the vehicle's dashboard, each unit being covered by a particular contract for a particular road operator. For the transporter this entails time-consuming paperwork and costly administrative burden in reconciling travel data, received invoices, contracts clauses and payment orders.

The Commission Decision adopted today also lays down the rights and obligations of toll chargers, service providers, and users. Users will be able to subscribe to the service provider of their choice. Toll chargers will communicate the tolls due to the service providers, who will eventually invoice the users. Tolls paid via EETS may not exceed the corresponding national or local tolls.

EETS will be available within three years for all road vehicles above 3.5 tonnes or allowed to carry more than nine passengers, including the driver. It will be available for all other vehicles within five years.